

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 21-20264

YLLI DIDANI,

Defendant.

JURY TRIAL - VOLUME 7 - EXCERPT
(Testimony of Brandon Leach, Part 1-A)
BEFORE THE HONORABLE DENISE PAGE HOOD
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Theodore Levin United States Courthouse
231 West Lafayette Boulevard
Detroit, Michigan
Monday, February 24, 2025

APPEARANCES:

For the Plaintiff: Mark Bilkovic
Timothy McDonald
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
211 W. Fort Street, Suite 2001
Detroit, Michigan 48226
(313) 226-9623

For the Defendant: Ylli Didani
Appearing in Pro Se

Wade Fink
WADE FINK LAW, P.C.
550 W. Merrill Street, Suite 100
Birmingham, Michigan 48009
(248) 712-1054
(Appearing as Standby Counsel)

Also present: Special Agent Chad Hermans
Maria DiCarlo, Paralegal

To obtain a copy of this official transcript, contact:
Sheila D. Rice Official Court Reporter
(313) 234-2610 • sheila_rice@mied.uscourts.gov

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E X H I B I T I N D E X

<u>Exhibit No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Admitted</u>
Government's 1.4	Photograph	15	16
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1 Detroit, Michigan

2 Monday, February 24, 2025

3 11:27 a.m.

4

 - - -

5 (Beginning of Excerpt.)

6 MR. BILKOVIC: May the Government call our next
7 witness?

8 THE COURT: Yes, please.

9 MR. BILKOVIC: We call Brandon Leach.

10 THE COURT: Raise your right hand, sir.

11 (Oath administered.)

12 THE COURT: You may be seated.

13 Do you have any devices that are going to go off
14 during court?

15 THE WITNESS: I do not.

16 THE COURT: State your full name for the record and
17 spell your last name, please.

18 THE WITNESS: Brandon Leach, L-E-A-C-H.

19 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you.

20 MR. BILKOVIC: Sir, can you bring the microphone just
21 a little bit closer to you so it magnifies. You can actually
22 pull up your chair and make it move.

23 THE WITNESS: There we go.

24 THE COURT: No, the chair won't go forward. You'll
25 have to move the mic.

1 THE WITNESS: Is this better?

2 MR. BILKOVIC: Much better.

3 THE COURT: And talk loudly; okay?

THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

* * *

6 || BRANDON LEACH,

7 was called as a witness at 11:28 a.m. after having been
8 duly sworn to testify to the truth.

* * *

10 DIRECT EXAMINATION

11 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

12 Q. A couple rows in front of you there's an exhibit book of
13 things that I'm going to ask you about, and then there's also a
14 mouse there that I might ask you to point to some things on the
15 screen. When you do that, don't hit the clicker. Just scroll,
16 because if you hit the clicker it's going to shut her stuff
17 off.

18 A. Okay.

19 || Q. Yes?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. Also, no unh-unhs, uh-huhs. Everything has got to
22 be, as you know, a verbal response.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And pull the mic closer to you, because now you leaned back
25 a little bit.

1 How are you employed?

2 A. I'm a police officer with the City of Farmington Hills
3 Police Department.

4 Q. How long have you been a police officer with Farmington
5 Hills?

6 A. Since May of 2006.

7 Q. So approximately 19 years?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And what is your current assignment?

10 A. I'm currently assigned as a detective in our Investigations
11 Bureau.

12 Q. How long have you been a detective?

13 A. Approximately two and a half years.

14 Q. Let me ask you to pull the mic a little closer.

15 A. June of 2022.

16 THE COURT: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that. June ...

17 THE WITNESS: June of 2022, your Honor.

18 THE COURT: Okay.

19 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

20 Q. Approximately two and a half years?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And approximately -- as far as size of the police
23 department, how many officers are in the Farmington Hills
24 Police Department?

25 A. I'd say approximately 115.

1 Q. And how many detectives are there?

2 A. We have 12 currently assigned to the Investigations Bureau.

3 Q. What are your duties as a detective with the Farmington
4 Hills Police Department?

5 A. I'm assigned an array of investigations stemming from
6 low-level misdemeanor property crimes all the way up through
7 homicides, drug trafficking, child abuse.

8 Q. And prior to becoming a detective with the Farmington Hills
9 Police Department what was your assignment?

10 A. I was assigned to the Drug Enforcement Administration, DEA
11 Detroit Field Division Group 6.

12 Q. And when you were assigned to the Drug Enforcement
13 Administration in Detroit, Group 6, what period of time was
14 that?

15 A. I started in January of 2016 with Group 6, and I was
16 officially sworn in federally in June of 2016.

17 Q. And you remained there until when?

18 A. Full time until I went into the Detective Bureau in June of
19 2022.

20 Q. And what was your position with the DEA?

21 A. I was officially a task force officer.

22 Q. And how does that come about? How does somebody in a state
23 or local police department become a task force officer with the
24 federal agency?

25 A. So within the Drug Enforcement Administration there's

1 several task force groups that are made up of agents, agents
2 from other federal entities, along with state and local sworn
3 officers.

4 Q. So is this something that's common within the DEA?

5 A. Yes, it is.

6 Q. And do you know whether or not it's common in other
7 agencies as well such as the FBI to have local officers as task
8 force officers?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And so you indicated you were part of Group 6. What does
11 that mean?

12 A. So there's multiple groups within the DEA Detroit Field
13 Division. Each one is usually assigned a number or a name such
14 as like -- we have enforcement groups, we have a tactical
15 diversion group, an asset recovery group, a tech group, airport
16 interdiction group. Group 6 was a high intensity drug
17 trafficking area enforcement group.

18 Q. And when you were in Group 6 approximately -- I'm sure it
19 would fluctuate, but approximately how many agents and task
20 force officers were there combined?

21 A. I'd say at any time obviously it was rotational due to the
22 local police departments usually had like a time perimeter on
23 most of their officers. So they rotate in and out, but I would
24 say approximately ten to 15 at any given time.

25 Q. And what were your duties as a task officer with the DEA?

1 A. We're to identify local suspects as well as in country, out
2 of country, any suspects identified in possessing, controlling,
3 manufacturing and trafficking controlled substances.

4 Q. And did you then investigate instances where you were able
5 or other agents were able to uncover evidence of those things
6 taking place?

7 A. Yes. Once we identify suspects or targets we build out an
8 organizational group, and then we attempt to take down that
9 group.

10 Q. And when you were with Group 6 would you work on
11 investigations within Group 6 by yourself or would there be
12 other TFOs or DEA agents that would work with you?

13 A. Usually it's a group effort.

14 Q. And what type of law enforcement training have you had?

15 A. I had extensive training. Specifically to controlled
16 substances, I would say I've been to Michigan State's
17 investigative school, the DEA task force officer school, been
18 through domestic cartel training, interviewing and
19 interrogation training, covert surveillance, undercover
20 narcotics training.

21 Q. Have you had any training in the area of money laundering?

22 A. And money laundering, yes.

23 Q. Now, I believe that you indicated that the DEA would also
24 have other federal law enforcement partners from other agencies
25 working with you in investigations also?

1 A. Correct. So sometimes they would actually be assigned to
2 the group. We're called task force agents due to the fact
3 there were agents with other entities. And sometimes we would
4 work with external agents that weren't actually associated with
5 the group, but there was overlapping elements of a case that
6 led you guys to collaborate in an investigation.

7 Q. What agencies, federal agencies, would be involved?

8 A. Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection, HSI.

9 Q. HSI is Homeland Security Investigations?

10 A. Yes, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

11 Q. I'm sorry?

12 A. ATF.

13 Q. Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms I think you said?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. What about the FBI?

16 A. FBI as well.

17 Q. And is this -- the investigation of Ylli Didani, were you
18 part of that investigation?

19 A. Yes, I was.

20 Q. And was this an investigation that involved multiple
21 agencies?

22 A. Yes, it was.

23 Q. Do you recall some of the other agencies that assisted in
24 this investigation?

25 A. Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol. We had some

1 of our county, Oakland County, affiliates help, Sterling
2 Heights PD task force officer.

3 Q. Do you know Derek Newsome?

4 A. Yes, I do.

5 Q. How is it that you know Derek Newsome?

6 A. He's with the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Division.

7 He was also associated with this case.

8 Q. And do you know Special Agent Chad Hermans who's seated at
9 our prosecution table?

10 A. Yes, I do.

11 Q. And is he somebody that you worked with in this
12 investigation also?

13 A. Yes, he is.

14 Q. When did you become part of this investigation or start
15 working on the investigation?

16 A. I was briefed on this case in November of 2017.

17 Q. And who was it that briefed you?

18 A. It was Border Patrol Officer Josh Bianchi.

19 Q. And was he assigned with the DEA at the time, if you know?

20 A. I don't recall if he was assigned particularly to a group
21 at that time frame.

22 Q. And did you end up working with Agent Bianchi?

23 A. Yes, I did.

24 Q. On this investigation?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And during the investigation did you come across and learn
2 information about various individuals?

3 A. Yes.

4 MR. BILKOVIC: Now, some of these have already been
5 admitted into evidence, your Honor, and some have not. I'm
6 going to be showing him photographs, Government's Exhibits 1.0
7 through 1.3, and then I'm going to be seeking to admit through
8 him 1.4 through 1.8.

9 Would I have permission, assuming the Court admits the
10 ones that have not been admitted, to publish those to the jury,
11 or you would like me to ask every time?

12 THE COURT: I'm sorry. You want to know whether or
13 not you should ask them to be admitted first?

14 MR. BILKOVIC: Once they're admitted, does the Court
15 want me to ask to publish every single time or will the
16 Court --

17 THE COURT: No. You can just publish them once
18 they're admitted.

19 MR. BILKOVIC: Thank you.

20 Okay. Could we put up --

21 Judge, would it be possible for Mr. McDonald to come
22 over and do the light switch?

23 THE COURT: Yes. I think he knows what lights are
24 impacted.

25 MR. BILKOVIC: Thank you, your Honor.

1 MR. McDONALD: I'm very experienced at this point.

2 MR. BILKOVIC: Can we put up Government's Exhibit 1.0
3 that's already previously been admitted.

4 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

5 Q. Do you recognize the individual in this photograph?

6 A. Yes, I do.

7 Q. And who is that?

8 A. Eric Puzio.

9 Q. And how is it that you know who Eric Puzio is?

10 A. He's an associate of Mr. Didani who was residing in the
11 Eastern District of Michigan at the time of this investigation.

12 Q. And can you --

13 A. At least part of the time.

14 Q. I'm sorry?

15 A. At least part of the time of this investigation.

16 MR. BILKOVIC: And can we go to Government's Exhibit
17 1.1, which is previously admitted.

18 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

19 Q. Do you recognize this individual?

20 A. Yes, I do.

21 Q. And who is this?

22 A. This is Donald Larson.

23 Q. And how is it that you know Mr. Larson?

24 A. Mr. Larson is a co-conspirator of Mr. Didani, also residing
25 in the Eastern District of Michigan.

1 Q. Now, have you had contact with Mr. Larson?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And do you recall when that was?

4 A. In September of 2019.

5 Q. And how did that contact come about?

6 A. We executed search warrants of his business, his residence,
7 and had a federal complaint authorized and conducted an
8 interview following his arrest on that date.

9 Q. And can you look at 1.2.

10 MR. BILKOVIC: Can we bring 1.2 up.

11 THE WITNESS: This is Martin Tibbitts.

12 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

13 Q. 1.2 is who?

14 A. Martin Tibbitts.

15 Q. And how does Mr. Tibbitts fit into this?

16 A. Mr. Tibbitts was also a conspirator of Mr. Didani's
17 residing in the Eastern District of Michigan.

18 Q. And can we go to 1.3. Do you know this individual?

19 A. Yes, I do.

20 Q. And who is this?

21 A. This is Peter Synowiec.

22 Q. And how does Mr. Synowiec pertain to the investigation
23 generally?

24 A. Mr. Synowiec is also an associate of Mr. Didani living in
25 the Eastern District of Michigan.

1 Q. Was he living in the Eastern District of Michigan during
2 the investigation?

3 A. Yes, he was.

4 Q. Are you aware of any businesses that he owns?

5 A. He owns Cattleman's Meat Market in Taylor, Michigan and
6 then a second Cattleman's in Center Line, Michigan.

7 MR. BILKOVIC: Okay. Don't bring this one up yet.

8 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

9 Q. If you can look in your book at Government's proposed
10 Exhibit 1.5.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you recognize the person in this photograph?

13 A. I do.

14 Q. And who is this?

15 A. This is Alexander Meskouris.

16 Q. How does Mr. Meskouris fit into this investigation?

17 A. He is a real estate agent based out of New York that was
18 utilized by Mr. Didani.

19 MR. BILKOVIC: Your Honor, at this time I would move
20 for admission into evidence of Government's proposed Exhibit
21 1.5 and publish it to the jury once it's admitted.

22 THE COURT: We're on 1.4 or 1.5?

23 MR. BILKOVIC: One point -- oh, no, I'm sorry. I
24 skipped 1.4. I went to 1. --

25 THE COURT: So this is 1.5?

1 MR. BILKOVIC: Yes. I'm sorry.

2 THE COURT: Okay. Very well.

3 Any objection to 1.5, Mr. Didani?

4 DEFENDANT DIDANI: No, your Honor.

5 THE COURT: Very well. It's admitted.

6 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

7 Q. And this is Alexander Meskouris?

8 A. Yes, it is.

9 Q. Okay. Can you take a look at Government's proposed Exhibit
10 1.4 and tell me if you recognize the person in that photograph?

11 A. Yes, I do.

12 Q. And who is that?

13 A. This is Philip Daskal.

14 THE COURT: Philip what?

15 THE WITNESS: Daskal, D-A-S-K-A-L.

16 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

17 Q. And do you know anything about Mr. Daskal with respect to
18 this investigation?

19 A. Yes. He's a vice president of sales for a company called
20 INKAS Armored Manufacturing out of Canada, and he had dealings
21 with Mr. Didani for the purchase of vehicles.

22 Q. And INKAS is spelled I-N-K-A-S?

23 A. That is correct.

24 MR. BILKOVIC: Your Honor, at this time I would move
25 for admission into evidence of Government's proposed Exhibit

1 1.5.

2 THE COURT: Do you have any objection?

3 DEFENDANT DIDANI: No objection, your Honor.

4 THE COURT: Very well. 1.4 is admitted.

5 MR. BILKOVIC: And can we publish it to the jury?

6 THE COURT: Yes.

7 MR. BILKOVIC: Thank you.

8 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

9 Q. And again, this is just a photograph of Mr. Daskal?

10 A. Yes, it is.

11 Q. And have you had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Daskal
12 during this investigation?

13 A. Yes, I have.

14 Q. Okay. Can you look at the proposed Government's proposed
15 Exhibit 1.6?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And what is Government's proposed Exhibit 1.6? Do you
18 recognize it?

19 A. I do. This is a photograph of -- forgive me if I pronounce
20 it wrong, but Fatjon Bajrami.

21 Q. And are you aware during this investigation where
22 Mr. Bajrami was living?

23 A. Yes. He was based on a suburb outside of Chicago,
24 Illinois.

25 Q. And do you know whether or not he is an associate of

1 Mr. Didani?

2 A. Yes, he is.

3 MR. BILKOVIC: Your Honor, at this time I would move
4 for admission into evidence of Government's proposed Exhibit
5 1.6.

6 THE COURT: Any objection?

7 DEFENDANT DIDANI: No objection.

8 THE COURT: Very well. 1.6 is admitted.

9 MR. BILKOVIC: And I would ask to publish it to the
10 jury.

11 THE COURT: You may.

12 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

13 Q. And you indicated Fatjon Bajrami. Is the first name
14 F-A-T-J-O-N?

15 A. Yes, it is.

16 Q. Last name B-A-J-R-A-M-I?

17 A. Correct.

18 THE COURT: Spell his first name again.

19 MR. BILKOVIC: F-A-T-J-O-N.

20 THE COURT: Okay.

21 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

22 Q. And can you look at Government's proposed Exhibit 1.7.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And do you recognize the individual depicted in that
25 photograph?

1 A. I do. This is Dayiberto Torres-Rosario.

2 Q. Dayiberto, do you know how to spell that?

3 A. D-A-Y-I-B-E-R-T-O.

4 Q. And what about Torres?

5 A. T-O-R-R-E-S.

6 Q. And Rosario?

7 A. R-O-S-A-R-I-O.

8 Q. During this investigation, was Mr. Torres-Rosario -- do you
9 know where he was living?

10 A. Yes. He was living in two known locations, one in the
11 Dominican Republic and another one in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

12 Q. During the investigation were you --

13 THE COURT: I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last place.

14 THE WITNESS: Guayaquil, Ecuador.

15 THE COURT: Okay.

16 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

17 Q. During the investigation, were you able to uncover an
18 association between him and Mr. Didani?

19 A. Yes, I was.

20 Q. And do you know during the investigation if you were able
21 to determine whether or not Mr. Torres-Rosario had any
22 nicknames?

23 A. He also went by the name of Mefi, M-E-F-I.

24 Q. Can you look at Government's proposed Exhibit 1.8 and tell
25 me if you recognize that?

1 A. Yes, I do.

2 Q. What is that?

3 A. This is a photograph of Thomas Sweeney, S-W-E-E-N-E-Y.

4 Q. During the investigation, do you know where Mr. Sweeney was
5 living?

6 A. Mr. Sweeney is a British national that is residing in Dubai
7 UAE.

8 Q. Do you know whether or not Mr. Sweeney, during the
9 investigation, whether you were able to uncover or determine
10 any nicknames that Mr. Sweeney went by?

11 A. Yes. He went by the moniker Loma or Lomachenko.

12 Q. Loma is spelled L-O-M-A?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Lomachenko, L-O-M-A-C-H-E-N-K-O?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. And what role did he have during your investigation, just
17 generally?

18 A. Co-conspirator with Mr. Didani.

19 THE COURT: A what?

20 THE WITNESS: Co-conspirator.

21 BY MR. BILKOVIC:

22 Q. Now, I don't have a photograph, but during your
23 investigation are you familiar with the name Belinda Tibbitts?

24 A. I am.

25 Q. And how are you familiar with the name Belinda Tibbitts?

1 A. Belinda Tibbitts is the widow of Martin Tibbitts.

2 Q. And do you know where she was living during the
3 investigation?

4 A. She spent time between Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan and
5 Pleasanton, California.

6 Q. And have you met with Ms. Tibbitts?

7 A. Yes, I have.

8 Q. Have you interviewed her?

9 A. Yes, I have.

10 Q. And do you know the defendant in this case, Ylli Didani?

11 A. Do I know him?

12 Q. Yes.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. During the investigation, do you know where Mr. Didani was
15 living?

16 A. Mr. Didani lived in an array of locations.

17 Q. Such as?

18 A. Eastern District of Michigan, Chicago, the Dominican,
19 Ecuador.

20 Q. When you say the Dominican, you're talking about Dominican
21 Republic?

22 A. Dominican Republic, yeah. I'm sorry.

23 Q. And do you know whether Mr. Didani has any family in the
24 United States?

25 A. Yes, he does.

1 Q. Do you know what family members he has in the United
2 States?

3 A. He has a mother and father that reside in Elmwood Park,
4 Illinois.

5 Q. That reside where? I'm sorry.

6 A. Elmwood Park.

7 Q. Elmwood Park?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Now, when you got involved in this investigation in 2017,
10 did you eventually become one of the lead investigative agents?

11 A. Yes.

12 THE COURT: Okay. This is a good place to stop today.

13 All right.

14 When we are we coming back tomorrow, 9:00 or 9:30?

15 MR. BILKOVIC: What's your pleasure?

16 THE COURT: 9:30, okay.

17 Is that what you have, too, jurors?

18 Okay. Remember that you're not permitted to talk
19 about the case among yourselves or anyone else until I tell you
20 it's time to deliberate. And don't use any social media or any
21 other computer program or anything to find out anything about
22 anybody involved in the case, any place in the case or anything
23 about any of the objects of the case, okay.

24 And have a good evening and I'll see you tomorrow
25 morning. You may step down.

1 Please rise for the jury.

2 (The jury left the courtroom at 11:46 a.m.)

3 THE COURT: Mr. Leach, I'm sorry. You must also step
4 down, but I'd like you to come back tomorrow in time to be on
5 the stand at 9:30 if you would, please.

6 THE WITNESS: I will.

7 THE COURT: Please don't discuss your testimony with
8 anyone.

9 THE WITNESS: I will not.

10 (End of excerpt at 11:47 a.m.)

11 — — —

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, Sheila D. Rice, Official Court Reporter of the United States District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, appointed pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 753, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages is a correct transcript from the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

s/Sheila D. Rice

Sheila D. Rice, CSR-4163, RPR, RMR, FCRR
Federal Official Court Reporter
United States District Court
Eastern District of Michigan

Date: 04/11/2025
Detroit, Michigan.